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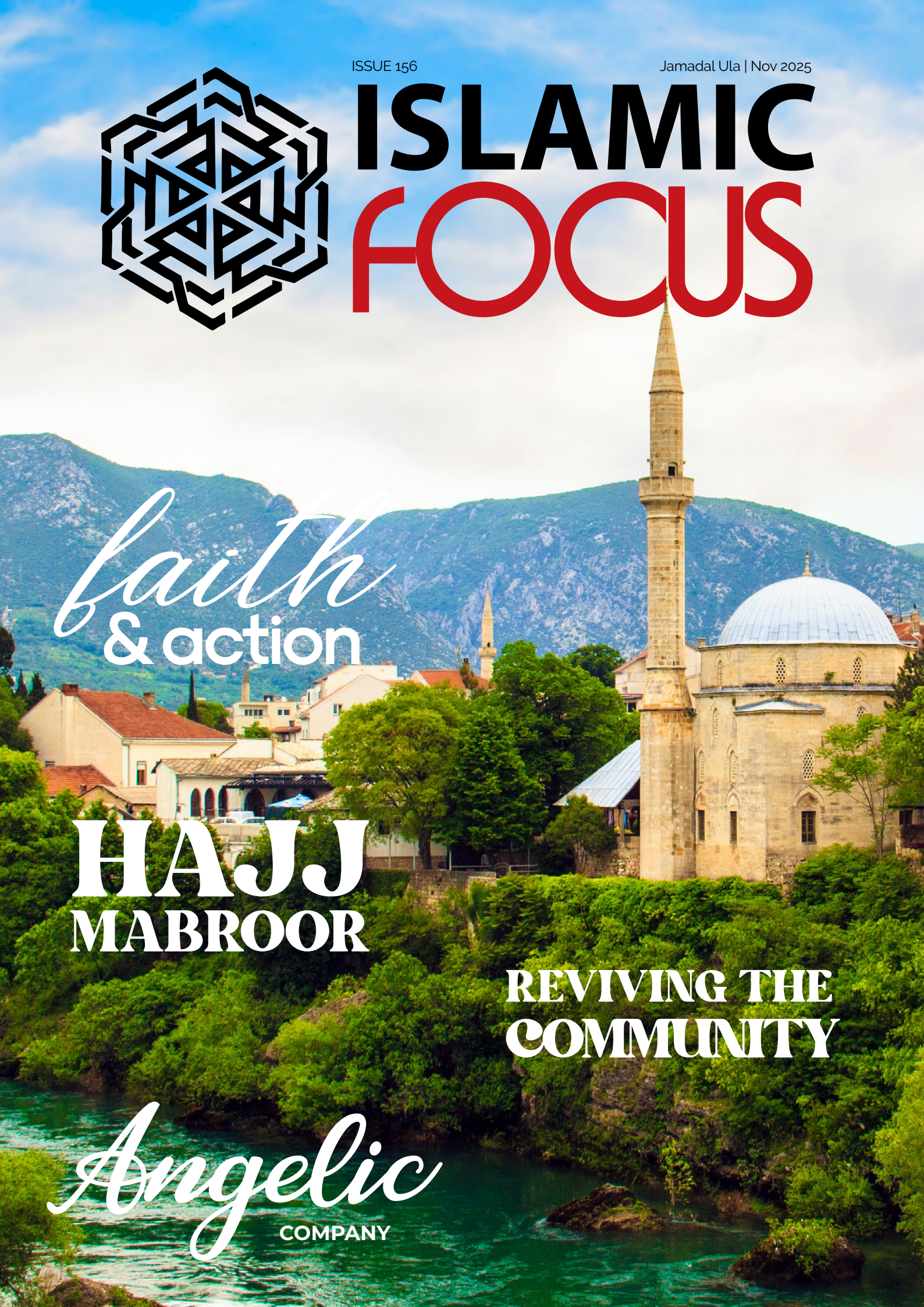
ISLAMIC FOCUS



faith & action

HAJJ MABROOR

REVIVING THE COMMUNITY

Angelic COMPANY

Ahlan Wasahlan...
FROM THE EDITOR

While we celebrate the Hajj, we also wander through the darkness that overshadows the Muslim community worldwide. As we search for light in the darkness, we must turn to the illuminating lessons presented by the very season of Hajj. In the article on Faith and Action we explore the relationship between ourselves and Prophet Ebrahim alaihis salaam and reflect on the lessons from his life. Among these is that our faith must be coupled with action.

Ibn Qayyim rahimahullah describes our guardian Angel as, "A person's companion, who brings him most benefit from among creation, the one who is sincerest to him and the one in whose closeness lies his happiness. There is nothing which brings a person greater benefit than the company of his Angel who is his guardian when he is awake and asleep, in this life, at the time of death and in the grave." Our article highlights ways to gain the company of such Angels.

Islam is timeless and not seasonal. It is for all times and all people. Acts of worship are carried out at specified times such as Salaah and Hajj, but the meanings and lessons we derive from them are timeless. The lessons the Hajj pilgrim implements on his sacred journey and which he will take back home are for those who are not on Hajj as well. These lessons need to be taken to heart and renewed annually especially around the Hajj period. The article on Hajj Mabroor highlights some much-needed lessons from Hajj that we can implement in our lives the year through.

One of the more pressing concerns facing humanity is the breakdown of morals and a workable social order. In the article on reviving the community we touch on how we can use an Islamic foundation to establish an Islamic social order and community. A comprehensive plan requires more details and here we will only highlight some of the more important elements.

These articles are meant to provide an insight into topics that are of current relevance to our lives and inspire conversations around them.

Email your thoughts to us:
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Muhammad Badsha
(Moulana)

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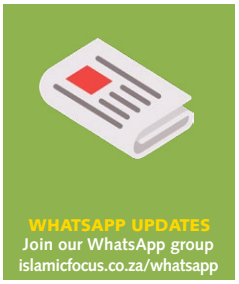
CONTENTS

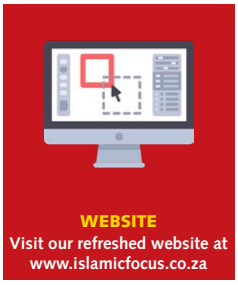
4 FAITH AND ACTION

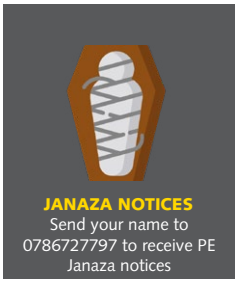
8 HAJJ MABROOR

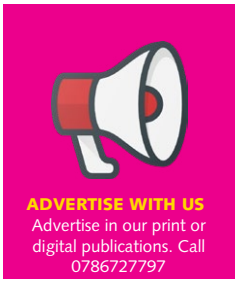
12 COMMUNITY

16 ANGELIC COMPANY









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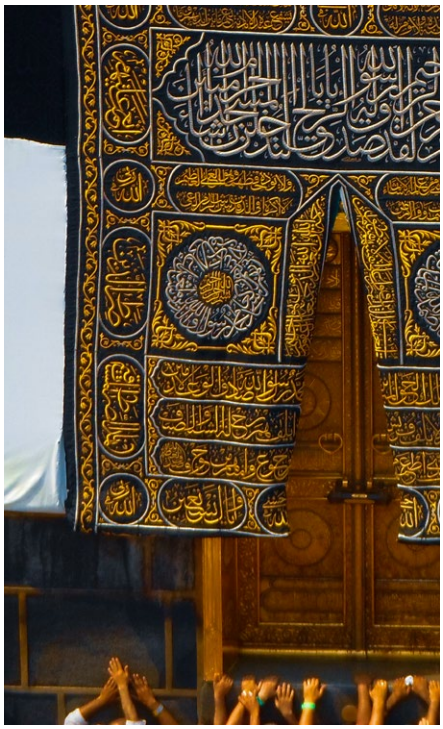

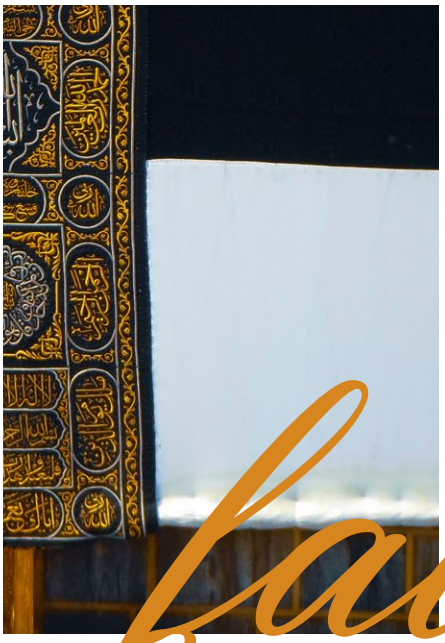

faith & action

As a testament to the perfection of Allah ﷻ's religion of Islam and His beautiful bounty on the Muslims, Islam is not only a way of life but it is relevant to every season of life. When Allah ﷻ takes an oath by time, it not only demonstrates the value of time but the relevance of Islam to every moment and season of life.

While we celebrate the season of Hajj, we also wander through the darkness that overshadows the Muslim community worldwide. As we search for light in the darkness, we must turn to the illuminating lessons presented by the very season of Hajj.

Whilst the season of Hajj is symbolic of many a great thing, the greatest symbolism for the Muslims is that Hajj, in the words of Imam Ghazali, represents the culmination, perfection, and completion of this beautiful religion. In the 10th year after Hijrah on the 9th Zul Hijjah, on the plains of Arafah, Allah ﷻ revealed the verse of Quran, "Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My blessing upon you, and chosen Islam as a religion and a way of life for you." (Noble Quran 5:3)

As Allah ﷻ had selected the 9th day of Zul Hijjah and the plains of Arafah and the act of worship of Hajj for the culmination and completion of his religion so too has Allah ﷻ selected you and I to be the followers of this divinely perfect way of life. Allah ﷻ declares in Surah Hajj, "Strive for Allah, a struggle that is owed to Him. He has chosen you and did not impose any hardship on you in the religion, the faith of your father Ebrahim. He (Allah) named you as Muslims earlier and in this (Quran)…" (Noble Quran 22:78)

Consequently, from this verse we understand that there is an intrinsic relationship between ourselves and Ebrahim ﷺ and as such there is a deep lesson to be learned from his life: his supreme reliance on Allah ﷻ and the fervour of his faith coupled with his unquestionable sacrifice culminated in the blossoming of a once barren land.

The Noble Quran gives expression to the hope and dua of Ebrahim ﷺ in Surah 14, verse 37:

"Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in a valley of no vegetation, close to Your sanctified House, so that, Our Lord, they may establish Salaah. So make hearts among the people incline toward them and provide for them from the fruits that they might be grateful."

How many of us long to be in Mina, despite the scorching heat of the Makkan sun? How many people across the globe wait anxiously, for 10, 20, even 40 years to perform Hajj despite the barren landscape of Makkah Mukarramah?

As Ebrahim ﷺ's faith and sacrifice resulted in Makkah flourishing as a civilization, it is our faith and sacrifice that will lead to the Muslim community flourishing as a nation. You have been chosen

to follow Ebrahim ﷺ and you have been chosen to sacrifice like Ebrahim ﷺ.

It is this legacy of Ebrahim ﷺ of being devoted in his belief in Allah ﷻ, which earned him the accolade of Abu Tawheed, the father of monotheism. Whilst we rightfully speak of Ebrahim ﷺ in the context of Qurbani, sacrifice and of course Hajj, the greatest legacy of Ebrahim ﷺ was his yearning to find Allah ﷻ.

When a young Ebrahim ﷺ saw his community engaged in idol worship he realised that he could not worship that which was made by the hands of man. To prove to his people that worshipping celestial bodies did not make sense, Ebrahim ﷺ directed them to search for the creator in the stars, the moon and the sun. But as these cosmic bodies vanished he showed them that his Lord, majestic and supreme, does not wither. Ebrahim ﷺ said, "I am going to my Lord. He will guide me." (Noble Quran 37:99) It is this movement towards Allah ﷻ that is the essence of Hajj. Hajj in the Arabic language means al qasd ilaa muzam, an undertaking or exertion to that which is high and lofty. So while Hajj represents a physical movement of people from all parts of the globe to the exalted plains of Arafah, for you and I, it is a spiritual movement towards the recognition of the most Exalted.

Every act of religiosity is geared towards the recognition of Allah. Allah ﷻ informs us, "I did not create the Jinn and the human beings except for the purpose that they worship Me." (Noble Quran 51:56)

Man has been created for the sole worship of Allah ﷻ. Mujaahid ibn Jabr, the 7th century scholar of Tafseer explained worship in the context of this verse meant to recognize Allah ﷻ. The purpose of creation is the recognition of Allah ﷻ: Salah is to get closer to Allah ﷻ, fasting is to become conscious of Allah ﷻ and Hajj is to hand yourself over to Allah ﷻ.

What strikes one about Hajj is the mode in which Allah ﷻ conveys the obligation of Hajj. "As a right of Allah, it is obligatory on the people to perform Hajj of the House (Ka'bah)." (Noble Quran 3:97) No other act of worship has been commanded in a manner so intrinsically connected to the being of Allah ﷻ, the majesty of Allah ﷻ and the recognition of Allah ﷻ than that of Hajj. For Allah and Allah ﷻ alone is the Hajj.

It is this recognition of Allah ﷻ so deeply embedded in the heart of Ebrahim ﷺ that is best expressed through his submission to Allah in the words, "My prayer, my offering of sacrifice, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds." (Noble Quran 6:162) Returning from Hajj marks the pinnacle of one's devotions to Allah ﷻ, of having handed his every existence over to Allah ﷻ.

It recorded in Al Risalah al Qushairiyyah by Abu Bakr al Kattani that Abdul Qadr Jailani was once asked what it is to love Allah ﷻ. He paused, reflected and then his eyes started to brim with tears as he said,

"The one who has recognised Allah ﷻ is one who has become oblivious of himself, engrossed in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ, steadfast in the execution of the command of Allah ﷻ. The gaze of his heart is set on Allah ﷻ. The light of Allah ﷻ's awe, majesty and greatness has been burnt into his heart and he has drank from the cup of Allah ﷻ's love. Finally, Allah has revealed to him His recognition from behind his curtain of concealment. So if he speaks, he is conscious of Allah ﷻ, if he speaks it is only about Allah ﷻ. If he moves or stops it is under the command of Allah ﷻ. He belongs to Allah ﷻ, his mind is with Allah ﷻ and he lives for Allah." (Al Risalah al Qushairiyyah 2:493)

"My prayer, my offering of sacrifice, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds."

This is the meaning of, "As a right of Allah, it is obligatory on the people to perform Hajj of the House (Ka'bah)."

The Prophet ﷺ explained that Hajj is Arafah, but what is Arafah? The word Arafah shares the root letters with the word marifah which means to recognise. It is the place where we acknowledge our wrongs and recognise the greatness of Allah ﷻ. Arafah is five hours in the blazing heat of the desert crying one's heart out to Allah ﷻ. Standing on those plains with full conviction that our lives are totally in the control of Allah ﷻ. Hajj is Arafah and Arafah is Dua.

The Prophet ﷺ explains that

"Dua is the core and essence of worship."
(Tirmidhi 3371)

Remember Mujahid ibn Jabar said that worship is to recognise Allah ﷻ. Dua is at the centre or core of worship because when we have lost faith in this world and we turn to Allah ﷻ we do it with the greatest of sincerity and full recognition that all has failed us and only Allah ﷻ can save us.

This brings us to the final point, that coupled with our faith in Allah ﷻ is our sacrifice for Allah ﷻ. The Noble Quran is filled with instructions of faith coupled with action. Great scholars of Tasawwuf (self-reformation) of the past understood that faith demands sacrifice. Imam Shamil of the Naqshbandi Sufi order fought against the Russian Empire, Sheikh Abdul Qadr Jailani wrote extensively about standing up for justice, and Sheikh Omar al Mukhtar, a student of the Senussi Sufi order, led the Libyan resistance against the Italians.

While we celebrate Hajj we do so on the backdrop of a genocide taking place in real time in Gaza. The lessons from the life of Ebrahim ﷺ lead us to an understanding that we must have complete reliance on Allah ﷻ, particularly when we have lost faith in the world. Being ostracized by our community does not mean defeat, being thrown into the blazing fire does not mean defeat, leaving our family in a barren landscape does not mean defeat, being asked to sacrifice our children does not mean defeat.

With a firmness of faith and a willingness to sacrifice we will be rejoiced by the world despite our own people disregarding us, we will find peace in the heat despite the flames of the fire and we shall flourish as a nation despite our desolate situation.

Hajj is a clarion call not only for us to strengthen our faith in Allah ﷻ but to understand that our faith demands of us action and sacrifice. As two million Muslims complete the rights of Hajj, two million Muslims face a starvation and genocide in Gaza. The reality of the situation is that despite the tremendous terror the people of Gaza face, they have shown us the fervor of their faith, and modern-day examples of the sacrifice of Ebrahim ﷺ.

Hajj is a microcosm of how we ought to live our life as Muslims. This is why we revere the Haji (pilgrim) and it is why people hope to change their lives after Hajj.

If Hajj is meant to teach us how to live our lives as Muslims, it not only teaches about faith and sacrifice, but it teaches solidarity within the Muslim community. It teaches that we are one, and that all Muslim life is sacred.

As Ebrahim ﷺ made a call for Hajj that to this day is being answered, let us respond to that call by strengthening our faith in Allah ﷻ, let us sow the seeds of sacrifice so that the Muslim nation may blossom watered by our blood and sweat.

Adapted from a talk by Moulana Salmaan Fredericks

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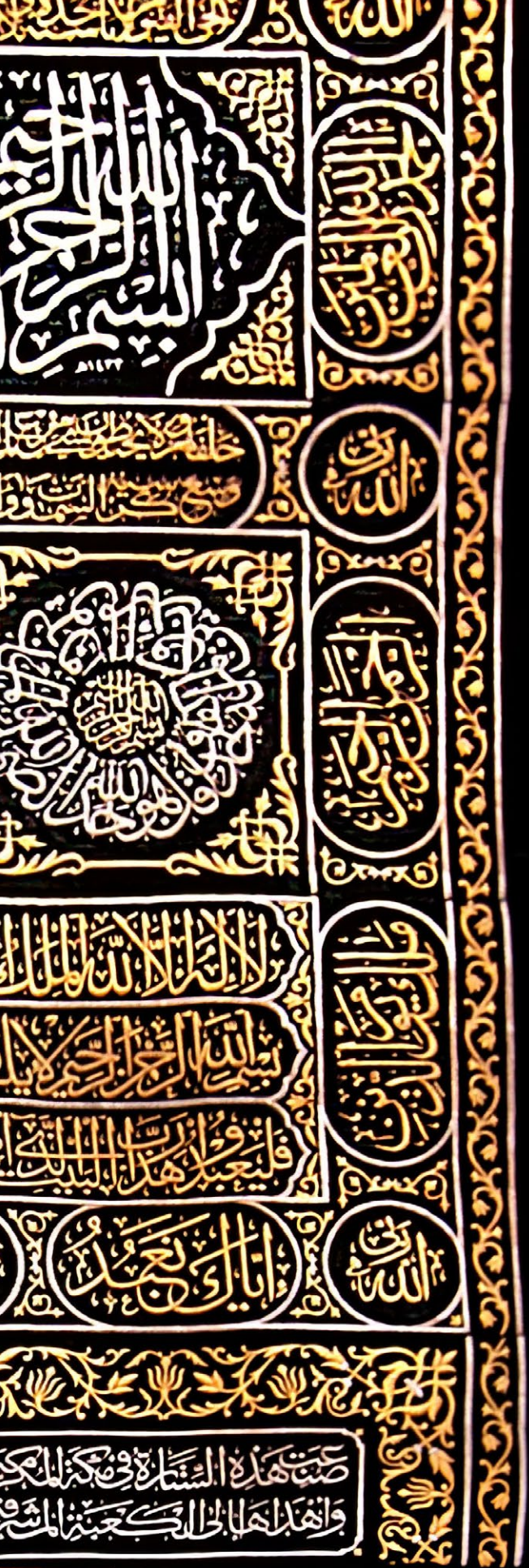


Hajj mabroor

Islam is timeless and not seasonal. It is for all times and all people. Acts of worship are carried out at specified times such as Salaah and Hajj, but the meanings and lessons we derive from them are timeless. The lessons the Hajj pilgrim implements on his sacred journey and which he will take back home are for those who are not on Hajj as well. These lessons need to be taken to heart and renewed annually especially around the Hajj period.

"The Hajj is (to be performed in) the months that are well-known. So, whoever undertakes Hajj in them, there should be no obscenity, no sin, no quarrel in the Hajj." (Noble Quran 2:197)

This verse of the Noble Quran tells us that the time for Hajj is well-known. It also clarifies that Hajj should be performed without, 1. Obscenity (Rafath), 2. Sin (Fusooq), and 3. Arguments (Jidaal).

1. Rafath refers to no intimate relations or talk being allowed between spouses in the state of Ihraam during the Hajj. Here something which is ordinarily permissible outside Ihraam is now forbidden. In fasting as well, eating, drinking and intimate relations are forbidden during that period. This is teaching us how to control our desires. The crowds in Hajj and the mixing of males and females can lead to the sin of immorality even within the precincts of the Holy lands. This is an issue that tends to be ignored but the reality is that when men and women are in close contact over a period, it becomes very difficult not to overstep the limits set by Islam in that interaction. Even the corporate world of high level companies is not free from the harassment and abuse that comes out of such an environment as evinced from books and memoirs of those who worked in those circles.

2. Fusooq refers to sin. While sin is prohibited at all times, it becomes more critical to abstain from it during the Hajj.

3. Jidaal means quarrelling, arguments and fighting should be avoided during the Hajj. Remember you have only one chance in your life to perform a Fardh (compulsory) Hajj. All other Hajj performed thereafter will be Nafl (optional). A person gets tested in Hajj with the crowds. Lots of things can provoke him. How he responds or reacts to the tests is important.

"The Hajj Mabroor has no reward except Paradise.

A person should also not be complaining about his Hajj. When we do Qurbani we are taught to do it with a happy heart. "The big animals of sacrifice are made by Us among the symbols of Allah for you." (Noble Quran 22:36) We are further instructed, "And whoever honours the symbols of Allah, it is certainly out of the piety of the heart." (Noble Quran 22:32) Ibn Abbas ﷺ a said that honouring them means choosing fat, healthy animals to sacrifice. Abu Umamah ibn Sahl said, "We used to fatten the sacrificial animals in Madinah Munawwarah." (Bukhari) The more expensive something is, the better it is to be offered seeking reward. Ibn Khuzamah ﷺ said, "The more something is difficult for you to lose, the more reward you get when you give it in charity." Among the actions that will give a person the taste of faith is giving Zakaat due on his wealth every year with a happy soul. (Abu Dawood 1582) We should spend happily on fulfilling our Hajj and not argue or complain of the tests we might face or the price we might pay.

The Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ outlines what makes a Hajj Mabroor, "The Hajj Mabroor has no reward except Paradise." (Al Mujam al Awsat 8629) We generally make Dua that the Haji should enjoy a Hajj that is Maqbool and Mabroor.

a. Maqbool means accepted. This Dua teaches us that our good deeds are totally dependent on acceptance by Allah ﷻ otherwise they are of no value or worth.

b. Mabroor can also mean accepted. The second meaning comes from the word Birr which means good deeds or piety. A Hajj filled with good deeds becomes the means of gaining Paradise.

And what is Paradise which is our goal? The Hadith tells us, "A (small) place equal to an area occupied by a whip in Paradise is better than the (whole) world and whatever is in it." (Bukhari 6415) A place in Paradise the size of this whip which is not more than a metre or so in length and not thicker than two fingers is better than the world and whatever it contains. Such pleasures are in store in Paradise which we have never seen, nor heard nor imagined.

On hearing the Hadith about Paradise being promised for a Hajj Mabroor, the Sahaba ﷺ were eager to know what is meant by Mabroor. Three things were highlighted that will enhance a person's Hajj and make it Mabroor in addition to the rituals that need to be performed. We should not merely be going through the motions, but the Haji should practice on them diligently while on his Hajj and carry these practices on to his daily life back home. Those who have not been on Hajj as yet can also practice on them and make them a part of their lives.

The three things that make a Hajj Mabroor are: 1. Making the greeting of Salaam common, 2. Feeding people, and 3. Kind speech.

1. When it comes to making the greeting of Salaam common, people tend to make Salaam to those they know and ignore those they don't. One of the signs of Qiyamah or the last day of this world is that people will only make Salaam to those they know. (Musnad Ahmad, 1:407-408) Allah ﷻ instructs us, "So when you enter homes, greet one another with Salaam, a greeting prescribed by Allah, which is blessed, pleasant." (Noble Quran, 24:61) Make it a habit to greet with Salaam when entering and leaving our homes. This will bring blessings within our houses

2. The second quality that will enhance a person's Hajj and gain him Paradise is to feed people. When a person cannot give a full meal to a fasting person, then even giving a sip of water to break his fast earns us the reward of his fast without his reward being reduced in any way. The reward of feeding is not dependent on giving someone a full meal. Feeding even a non-Muslim will bring this reward. A disreputable lady gave a thirsty dog water to drink, and her life changed. The ability to make the change for the better and to turn around her life came about due to feeding an animal. Imagine feeding a human being and more so a Muslim!

3. The third quality is kind speech. Situations arise in Hajj and in life which can be trying and challenging. People might rile us and say and do things to irritate us. We might in turn feel the need to respond and say a lot of things. We need to train ourselves to keep our tongues sweet and speak kind words. If we want to perform a Hajj of the highest level, we need to ensure that we speak pleasant words.

kind words

On the Day of Qiyamah a person will look to his right and see only his good deeds that he had performed in his life. He will look to his left and see the evil he had committed. And in front of him will be the blazing flames of the fire of Hell. (Bukhari, 7443) There is no comparison of the hardships of this world to the everlasting torment of the Hereafter.

The Hadith gives us a measure to gain an appreciation of the everlasting Hereafter in comparison to our life on earth, "The life of this world, compared to the Hereafter, is just like when one of you dips his finger in the ocean, let him contemplate how much of (water) his finger would carry?" (Muslim, 2858) The one or two drops that remain on your finger are the years of our lives we lived in this world in comparison to the rest of the water of the oceans which are the years of the Hereafter.

On the Day of Qiyamah we will discuss how much time we spent in this world. Some will say 10 days, some a day, and some an hour! A powerful illustration to represent eternity is given of a bird carrying a grain of sand from the world's shores every thousand years. Even if the bird were to move every grain of sand from a beach, or even the entire world, over an impossibly long period, it would still only be a tiny fraction of eternity.

The Hadith of Bukhari gives a prescription of how to save oneself from the fire of Hell, "Guard yourself against the fire of Hell, even with half a date in charity. If one cannot find it, then with a kind word." (Bukhari, 6540) Speaking kind words could bring happiness to someone's heart, create love, unity and bonds. The ability to speak kindly might be our means of entry to Paradise.

The Hadith gives a description of some amazing palaces in Paradise, "In Paradise there are rooms whose outside can be seen from their inside, and their inside can be seen from their outside." (Tirmidhi) If we see a smart house or a fancy building, we dream of owning it. This is in this perishable world. A Bedouin asked to who these palaces will belong. In reply to him, four aspects were highlighted, "1. For those who speak good words, 2. feed others, 3. fast regularly, and 4. perform prayer during the night while the people sleep."

Topping the list is speaking good words.

These should not only be reserved for strangers, for business associates, to close a deal or to win a customer. People tend to display a lot of tolerance in making a profit, but for the Hereafter, for the palaces of Paradise we need to ensure that we are doing this within our homes and especially with our families. There people get irritated and display bad character. With our parents we are told, "Do good to your parents. If any one of them or both reach old age, do not say to them oof (a word or expression of anger or contempt) and do not scold them, and address them with respectful words." (Noble Quran, 17:23) We are instructed to not express irritation with our parents with even a sound let alone words.

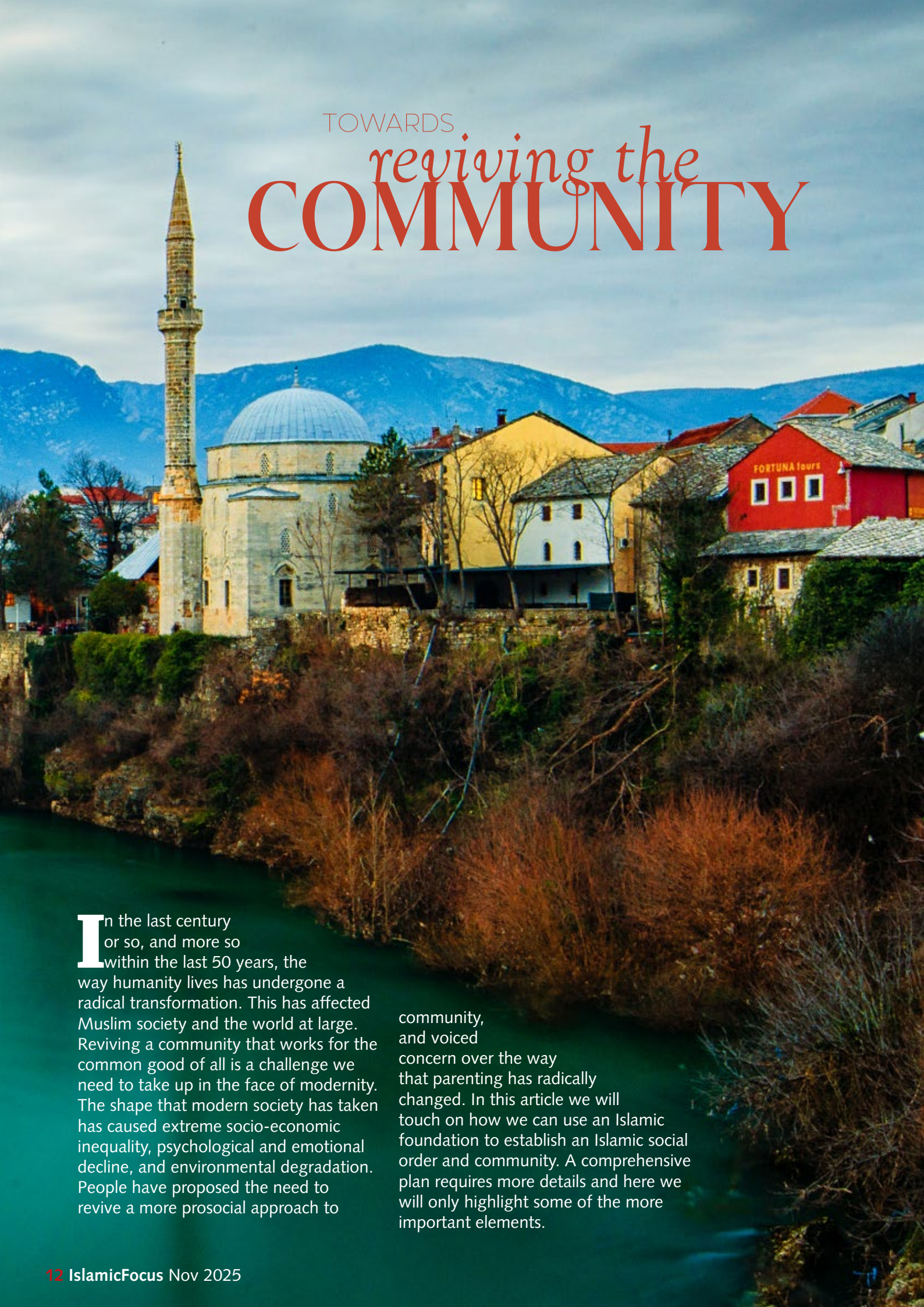
Imam Shawkani 🕋 notes, "Many people fall into this calamity where when they meet their wives and family their manners are at their worst. However, when they meet strangers, they soften up and their mood improves."

In Surah Baqarah, we are instructed to, "Say to the people what is good, and be steadfast in Salaah, and pay Zakaat." (Noble Quran, 2:83) Here speaking good words is mentioned before the command for Salaah and Zakaat to show us not to take it as secondary. When we recite the Noble Quran or make Zikr for example, we understand it to be acts of worship. But when we speak kindly, when we bring happiness to someone, or make them feel good, we don't regard it as an act of worship. The word used in the verse is Husnaa. This means good and translates as speak good words to people. In the Riwayah of Hamza and Kisaai it's read as Hasana meaning speak to people in a good way. When combining both meanings, the instruction is to say what is best in the best manner. Bringing a person's feelings alive with good words when he is down and out can mean the world to him. We go around killing people's hearts with spiteful and unkind words. Our relationships with our parents, kids, family and neighbours are destroyed with harsh words.

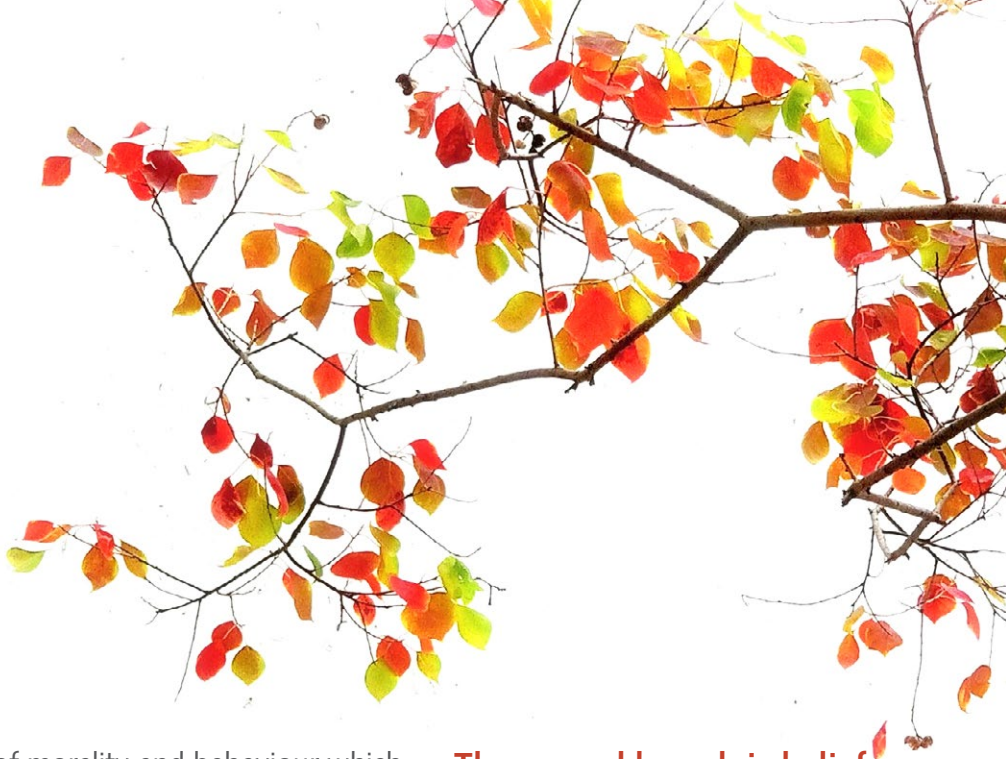
The effect of harsh, unkind words can be seen within our own lives as well. Malik ibn Dinar 🕋 said, "If you notice hardness in your heart, weakness in your body and deprivation in your provisions, then know that you could well have talked about that which does not concern you." (Fayd al Qadeer) The effect of the words we use can be felt in the material aspects of our lives.

These qualities of making the greeting of Salaam common, feeding people and speaking kindly enhance the Hajj of the pilgrim but also benefits us wherever we may be and at all times. Most importantly, we need to use our tongues correctly, spreading kindness, speaking good words and cutting out arguments, harsh and unkind words from our lives. We will see the difference in the quality of our own lives first.

TOWARDS *reviving the* COMMUNITY



In the last century or so, and more so within the last 50 years, the way humanity lives has undergone a radical transformation. This has affected Muslim society and the world at large. Reviving a community that works for the common good of all is a challenge we need to take up in the face of modernity. The shape that modern society has taken has caused extreme socio-economic inequality, psychological and emotional decline, and environmental degradation. People have proposed the need to revive a more prosocial approach to community, and voiced concern over the way that parenting has radically changed. In this article we will touch on how we can use an Islamic foundation to establish an Islamic social order and community. A comprehensive plan requires more details and here we will only highlight some of the more important elements.



Within Islam we have what are termed Shuab al Imaan, or the branches of faith. A Hadith tells us that there are 70 plus branches to faith. These can serve as an ideal foundation for personal and societal transformation. Imaan or beliefs provide the only real foundation within a turbulent, chaotic world for understanding our purpose and our accountability to Allah ﷻ. These values will shape our ethical priorities, and our actions will then bring these principles to life through our worship and service. These branches have the potential to foster spiritual refinement within ourselves and a more stable society which will in turn lead to a just and morally undivided community.

Ulama have extracted these branches of faith from the Hadith and explained them to guide us in understanding and practicing on them. They are generally classified into, 1. The outward, and 2. The inward or unseen which covers our soul, spirit and heart. The scholar of Muslim Spain, Abdul Jaleel ibn Musa al Qasri was among the first to define them in this way. Essentially, they cover Islam (the outward), Imaan (inner wisdom) and Ihsaan (practice and mastery).

The first branch for a community revival is belief in Allah ﷻ

The Hadith informs us that part of "Imaan means to bring belief in Allah." (Bukhari, 4777) This foundation establishes a society built on a shared ultimate authority that transcends human authority. It creates a single code of morality and behaviour which will prevent the breakdown of moral standards. A society based on faith does not root its ethics in ever-changing human preferences or shifting ideologies. When human beings formulate rules or structures, they undergo constant revision and adjustment. Even simple things like sport rules are subject to regular update and change. Such a society will hold firm to the unchanging Divine guidance contained in Islam which has stood the test of time and has proven perfectly adequate for every era and culture. In the modern world, everyone develops their own morals and life standards in isolation which results in the chaos we are witnessing.

On the individual level people would find purpose and value in their relations with Allah ﷻ rather than social validation and approval of others or material possessions. This creates a sense of accountability beyond purely worldly consequences. Such as society does not elevate material success as the ultimate criterion of worth. Even animal life and the environment will be viewed as the creation of Allah ﷻ to be treated with responsibility rather than mere resources for exploitation.

The second branch is belief in and following the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

The Prophet ﷺ said, "None of you truly believes until his desires are subject to what I have brought." (Sunan Kubra, 209) Following the lifestyle and commands of the Prophet ﷺ is necessary for eternal happiness and salvation in this world and the next, which is something we are all searching for. We don't need human trial and error to find the best response to any situation we encounter in life. We have the Sunnah which provides an authoritative model for human conduct. This prevents ethical chaos and unguided moral experimentation which is what shapes the modern outlook on life. It ensures that we have a perfect role model, with his life thoroughly documented for us to follow. Our religious practices will not depend on personal whims but will follow the authenticated lifestyle of the Prophet ﷺ. Society would use the Prophetic traditions for managing affairs and for dispute resolution rather than everchanging intellectual trends.

The third branch is love for Allah ﷻ

The Hadith declares that whoever has three qualities will experience the sweetness of faith. The first quality is that Allah ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ become more beloved to him than anything else. (Bukhari) This quality is essential because it motivates worship and ethical behaviour, transforming obligations into devotion rather than burden. It creates a society motivated by Divine love rather than mere obligations or fear. Such a society does not rely on force to maintain moral conduct but fosters obedience and good acts out of love and devotion.

A person related how he was on holiday at a resort. He told someone that he was looking for the place to read Salaah. That person told to go ahead and enjoy his Salaah rather than saying perform it. When have we read Salaah out of love and longing for Allah ﷻ? The Prophet ﷺ said, "The coolness and delight of my eyes lies in Salaah." (Nasaai) He would instruct Bilal ؓ, "Stand, O Bilal, and comfort us with the (call to) Salaah." (Abu Dawood) We need to read Salaah with joy, peace, comfort and serenity. How often do we sigh when the Athaan goes off interrupting our schedule? How often do we begrudgingly squeeze our Salaah in between other engagements?

There are three basic elements that can aid in bringing enjoyment in our Salaah and other acts of worship: 1. Constantly think about Allah ﷻ, 2. Be in awe of His greatness, and 3. Recognise our sins, weakness and desperate need of Allah ﷻ. This will bring focus in our acts of worship. To implement this love for Allah ﷻ in our worship, we need to, 1. Get to know who Allah ﷻ is, 2. Stop and reduce the amount of sin in our lives, 3. Soften our hearts with Zikr, remembrance of death, visiting the graveyard, and feeding the poor, and 4. Increase our private worship.

> Two qualities are never combined in a believer: **miserliness and bad behaviour.**

The fourth quality is generosity

"Two qualities are never combined in a believer: miserliness and bad behaviour." (Tirmidhi) Generosity is a means of providing relief to people and satisfying hunger. It fosters love and closeness since people are naturally inclined to those who treat them with kindness. I had a conversation with a man in his 90's. He recounted how he had set up farm shops in the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal in the 1950's and 60's. When they were up and running successfully, he would give them to his younger brothers and stepbrothers to run. He would move on to other areas and would give these businesses to his siblings without taking a cent. Did it make him poor? No. He lived a successful, contented life, maybe not a multi-millionaire but debt-free, eating what he wished till his last days, surrounded by over 50 grand and great grandchildren. He left this world peacefully, having achieved his goals of this world, fulfilling his obligations to Allah ﷻ and his responsibilities to his family and community. He was attached to the Masjid.

We might not realise the benefits of our generosity in our lives and those around us, but rest assured it bears fruit. Generosity ensures that economic activity is not driven solely by self interest or maximising profits, but by mutual care and responsibility. Such a society would systematically address hunger and other societal issues and needs through individual generosity, Generosity would be cultivated as a spiritual virtue bringing one closer to Allah ﷻ and attaining piety, while society would develop networking of support beyond governmental structures. Such a society would not tolerate economic selfishness, nor would it reduce human worth to financial productivity. The material world

belongs to Allah ﷻ, wealth is a trust and all of us will be held accountable for that trust.

Someone wrote a thought-provoking article. He said that he had a difficult upbringing: his father had died, while his mother was not supportive. He attended public school, but his life took some wrong turns. He ended up successful despite the odds, yet he wrote that this success was not self-made. He said that people helped him along the road in ways we might not realise: taxes paid for the public transport he used and the public school he attended. People showed faith in him and all these elements combined to make him the success he was.

Youth unemployment in South Africa is staggeringly high: Around 62,4% of youth aged 15-24 years old don't have a job. This stands at 9,1% in places like Australia and 10,6% in Ireland. Youth unemployment leads to reduced productivity, lower consumer spending and long-term scarring of the economy. It increases social unrest, crime, mental health issues and strains social support systems. It leads to decline in self-esteem, increase in social isolation and difficulty in transitioning to adulthood. Ask anyone who grew up in the 90's and earlier: as kids on weekends and during the holidays they played and walked through the neighbourhood stopping at friends houses to refresh. It takes a village to raise a child, and the community had a hand in shaping these kids, placing less of a burden on the parents as the responsibility was shared. The community played a role in shaping their lives and in mentoring them. Kids could get weekend and starter jobs easily. This is something society needs to revive: training and development of youth, creating apprenticeships, internships and entry-level positions to provide young people with valuable work experience and a sense of fulfilment in getting a pay cheque. Your business might not necessarily need them, but this is a fulfilling form of charity that provides positives to society at large. Youth need to be empowered with small business development, creating interest-free loans as a way out of the crippling interest-based financial tools. This generosity would not limit financial support to profit-driven ventures whose consequences are confined to the material world only but continues to reap benefits in the next life.

These are some of the branches of faith which shape the individual and society in profound ways. There are many more such tools to effectively revive the once-treasured community structures we enjoyed. A society based on these branches as well as sincerity, spreading Salaam, using reconciliation as a means of dispute resolution, and more will be one that has a vibrant spiritual connection to Allah ﷻ, and personal conduct based on the Prophetic example. Its public spaces would be warm and welcoming. It would be a structured, united and morally grounded society which supports individuals within it in meaningful ways. Without a real community like that of old, we will only see an increase in the chaos, moral degradation and anti-social behaviour which is a hallmark of modern society.

Dr. Yunus E. Gaida

B.Ch.D.(U.W.C.) P.D.D. (Clin. Dent.) (Stell.)

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"Do not treat people except in the way you would love to be treated by them." (Tabrani)
"Love for people what you love for yourself." (Musnad Aḥmad)

Angelic companions

In life we not only achieve our successes through our efforts alone. Sometimes we achieve beyond what our capabilities and resources would suggest we can achieve. This is because there are multiple other factors which contribute to our success.

Among these is that we make Dua and ask Allah ﷻ to help us achieve our goals. "Dua is the essence of worship." (Tirmidhi) When we make Dua we show that our only hope is Allah ﷻ alone. Ibn al Arabi says that the word used in the Hadith of Tirmidhi is Mukh or marrow. "Marrow is a source of strength for the limbs. In a like manner, Dua is the core of worship, giving strength to the acts of worship. It is the soul of worship." Our daily Duas for ourselves are critically important.

Then we earn other people's Duas by doing acts of kindness to them. "Perhaps you are asleep while the doors of Heaven are knocking with tens of Duas made for you by a person you helped, or a sad person you cheered up, or a distressed person you brought relief to. Therefore never underestimate the value of any good that you do." (Ibn Qayyim)

We also look for the Duas of the pious in the hope that their Dua is more likely to be answered. We look for those we think to be greatest in terms of their acts of worship and the fewest in sin. Now imagine being presented with an opportunity of getting the Duas of those whose worship is uninterrupted and who have no sins to their credit? Badr al Deen ibn Jamaa'a said, "People compete for the Duas of the pious or those they assume to be pious. What then of the Dua of the Angels?" Ibn Battal affirms, "It is well known that the Dua of the Angels if answered."

Angels are created from light. To get an understanding of how many Angels there are, 70,000 of them come to the Baitul Mamoor, the Kabah in the Heavens, daily to worship and leave never to return. The Hadith of Tirmidhi tells us that the sky creaks due to the huge numbers of Angels engaged in Sajdah (prostration) in it. Angels never tire in carrying out the worship of Allah ﷻ, "And those (Angels) nearest to Him (Allah ﷻ) are not too proud to worship Him, nor do they tire." (Noble Quran 21:19)

The Angels are our companions: we all have two who record our deeds. We also have Angels assigned to protect us, "For everyone (from among you) there are Angels replacing one another, in front of him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah." (Noble Quran 13:11) The less sins we commit the further the devil goes away from us and the closer our guardian Angels come.

Ibn Qayyim ﷺ describes this guardian Angel as, "A person's companion, who brings him most benefit from among creation, the one who is sincerest to him and the one in whose closeness lies his happiness.

There is nothing which brings a person greater benefit than the company of his Angel who is his guardian when he is awake and asleep, in this life, at the time of death and in the grave. He is a source of comfort in his loneliness, his companion in isolation, and the one who shares his secrets." This Angel defends him and encourages him towards doing good. "Satan has influence with the son of Adam and the angel has influence. As for the influence of Satan, he promises evil and denies the truth. As for the influence of the angel, he promises goodness and affirms the truth." (Tirmidhi)

When a person becomes good and his soul resembles the Angels in its character and actions, then for such a person, "The Angel becomes his guardian, guides him and advises him, and teaches him. He keeps him firm and prompts him to say the correct things. He seeks forgiveness for him when he sins, reminds him when he forgets, consoles him when he is sad, puts tranquillity in his heart when he feels scared, and wakes him up for Salaah if he is sleeping. He warns him against being attached to the world and encourages him to seek rewards from Allah ﷻ." The Angel becomes his neighbour and special guest.

To get the company of the Angels we need to understand what they love and what draws them closer. Angels love the pious because the love to be surrounded by the words of Allah ﷻ and His Zikr. They look for gatherings of Zikr and sit in them. They travel the earth conveying our Salaams to the Prophet ﷺ. On a Friday, they stand at the doors of the Masjids to record the names of those who come the earliest for Juma. The Masjids have pillars: those who are attached to the Masjid. In turn these regular Musallis have special companions from among the Angels. Like how we look for the Masjid regulars when they are missing for a Salaah, these Angels also ask about them, visit them if they are sick and help them if they are in need. To become close to these Angels we need to become attached to the Noble Quran and the Masjid. "The one who is proficient with the Quran will be with the noble and righteous scribes (the Angels)." When we recite the Noble Quran, the Angels draw close to hear the words. If we recite Ayatul Kursi before sleeping, an Angel stands guard to protect us. (Bukhari)

One of the functions of the Angels is to make Dua for the believers. This is in general but there are specific actions that inspire Angels to make Dua for us specifically. In this age of modernity and science we tend not to give importance to those things our senses don't perceive. One such example is the voices of the Angels yet unknown to us their voices can cause a positive shift in our lives, transitioning us from sin to worship, from darkness to light.

> ***The one who is proficient with the Quran will be with the noble and righteous scribes (the Angels).***

The Angels are on standby, waiting. We need to set them to work! Do actions that cultivate the company of the Angels. They will be with us in this life and the Hereafter, comforting us, "Surely, those who have declared: 'Our Lord is Allah', then remained steadfast, on them the Angels will descend, saying, 'Do not fear, and do not grieve; and be happy with the good news of the Paradise that you had been promised. We have been your friends in the worldly life, and (will remain as such) in the Hereafter.'" (Noble Quran 41:30-1)

HADITH

VERIFICATION SERIES 18

In this series we bring you a selection of topics from hadithanswers.com

A HADITH ON A WAR IN MINA

Question: Is the following Hadith authentic?

Nabi ﷺ said:"In the month of Dhul Qa'da there will be fighting and breaching of agreements between the tribes due to which Hajis [pilgrims] will be looted and there will be war in Mina. There will be a general massacre and a great deal of bloodshed, so much so that blood will be flowing even at the large Jamarah. It will come to a point that even the people of the Haram (including the Mahdi) will run and will come to the spot between the Rukn and Maqam Ibrahim and he will be pledged allegiance to, even though he (Mahdi) will dislike having the oath taken on him. It will be said to him that if you refuse to have the oath taken [to be our leader] we will strike your neck. Then the oath will be taken. The number of people who will take this pledge will be equal to the number of people at Badr. The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth will be pleased with them (the oath takers)"

Answer: Answer: Imam Hakim ﷺ has recorded this Hadith. However, 'Allamah Dhahabi ﷺ has declared the chain very weak.
(Mustadrak Hakim, vol. 4, pg. 503)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

THE AFFAIRS OF THE BANU ISRAEEL WERE MANAGED BY THEIR AMBIYA

Question: Is this Hadith authentic?

Sayyiduna Abu Hurayrah ﷺ reported that Nabi ﷺ said: "The affairs of the Banu Israeel were managed by the Ambiya. Whenever a Nabi passed away, another would succeed him. However, there is no Nabi after me. Rather, there will be numerous caliphs." The Sahabah ﷺ asked, "What do you command us to do?" He replied, "Fulfil your allegiance to each leader in succession, granting them their due rights. For indeed, Allah will hold them accountable for what He has entrusted to them."

Answer: Imams Bukhari and Muslim ﷺ have recorded this narration. The Hadith is therefore authentic (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith: 3455, Sahih Muslim, Hadith: 1842)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

THE REWARD FOR SINCERELY ASKING ALLAH TA'ALA FOR MARTYRDOM

Question: Can I quote this Hadith?

Sayyiduna Sahl ibn Hunayf ﷺ reported that Nabi ﷺ said: "Whoever sincerely asks Allah for martyrdom, Allah will grant him the ranks of the martyrs even if he passes away on his bed."

Answer: : Imam Muslim ﷺ has recorded this Hadith in his Sahih. The Hadith is therefore authentic (Sahih Muslim, Hadith: 1909)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

A NARRATION STATING THAT BAYTUL MAQDIS (AQSA) WAS INHABITED BY THE AMBIYA

Question: I am looking for the primary source/reference for the following statement of Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas ﷺ: "The Ambiya built and inhabited Baytul Maqdis. There is no handspan within it where a Nabi has not offered Salah or an angel has not stood."

Answer: : I have not come across this statement of Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas ﷺ in any of the primary Hadith sources. This narration is cited in non-primary sources (without a chain of narrators) like books that discuss places and cities.

(Kitabul Buldan of Ibnul Faqih, pg. 147 and Mu'jamul Buldan, vol. 5, pg. 167)

A similar narration is recorded in Fadailu Baytil Maqdis of Ibnul Murji Al Maqdisi (demise: 492 A.H.) as the statement of the Tabi'i; 'Ata al Khurasani ﷺ.

'Ata al Khurasani ﷺ said: "Baytul Maqdis was built by the Ambiya and inhabited by the Ambiya. By Allah, there is not a handspan within it except that a Nabi has prostrated there."

(Fadailu Baytil Maqdis, pg. 222)
And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

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